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ABSTRACT

In two studies, children rated infant pictures on an "unhappy-happy" scale after being told how adolescent male models (black or white) had allegedly rated them. The subjects in Experiment 1 were black and white females and males (ages 9-12 years) attending inner-city schools in Des Moines, Iowa. Those in Experiment 2 were white females and males (ages 10-11 years) attending school in a predominantly white, middle-class, university community (Iowa City). In both experiments, the subjects as a total group were significantly affected by the models' ratings. In Experiment 1, girls conformed more than did boys; there was no sex difference in Experiment 2. With regard to race, only one obtained effect is of any direct interest (in Experiment 1, black subjects conformed more to white than to black models). The results suggest that social-class differences may now exist in the conformity behavior of the sexes. The general absence of race effects is viewed as encouraging, from an equalitarian standpoint. (Author)

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SEX AND RACE EFFECTS IN THE CONFORMITY BEHAVIOR OF UPPER-ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN

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Sex and Race Effects in the Conformity Behavior of Upper-Elementary-School-Aged Children

A review of the literature on children's conformity behavior reveals that some 22 studies have been published in which sex differences were examined. In 10 of these, no significant sex effects were obtained (Messerschmidt, 1933; Iscoe & Williams, 1963, Exp. II; McConnell, 1963; Lucito, 1964; Harper, Hoving, Holm, Sasso, & Dubanoski, 1965; Costanzo & Shaw, 1966; Utech & Hoving, 1969; Hamm & Hoving, 1971; Landsbaum & Willis, 1971; Gingrich, 1973). In 10 other cases, effects were obtained that involved interactions of sex with other variables, thus making unqualified assertions about sex differences inappropriate (Harvey & Rutherford, 1960; Patel & Gordon, 1960; Iscoe & Williams, 1963, Exp. I; Iscoe, Williams, & Harvey, 1963, 1964; Saltzstein, Rowe, & Green, 1966; Hamm & Hoving, 1969; Hamm, 1970; Mock & Tuddenham, 1971; Allen & Newtson, 1972). If one were nevertheless to generalize about this second group of studies, it seems clear that greater conformity in girls than in boys was the most frequent outcome. However, it should be stressed that, under certain conditions, no differences or even ones in the opposite direction (Iscoe et al., 1963; Saltzstein et al., 1966) occurred. In only the two remaining studies (Ausubel, DeWit, Golden, & Schpoont, 1956; Tuddenham, 1961) were straightforward sex differences revealed, these in both instances being in the direction of greater conformity on the part of girls than of boys.

Only four studies were found that dealt with race (black-white) differences in children's conformity behavior. Two of these (Lucito, 1964;

Janney, Mallory, Rossitto, & Simon, 1969) failed to reveal a significant race effect. Iscoe et al. (1964) did obtain significant race main effects using two different measures (blacks less conforming than whites in both cases), but interactions of race with sex and age (both measures) and with IQ (one of the measures) complicated the picture. Unfortunately, these authors did not follow up the interactions with appropriate simple effects tests. It does appear, however, that the race effect held for the females but not the males. The interactions with age and IQ do not lend themselves to easy interpretation. Finally, Mock & Tuddenham (1971) have reported evidence for more conformity in blacks than whites in a complex study involving several variables. Again, interactions between race and various of the other variables involved in the study preclude the drawing of any unqualified conclusions regarding race differences.

Given the recent developments in our society pertaining to equality of the sexes and races, it seemed appropriate to determine if, at the present time, clear sex and race differences are demonstrable in the conformity behavior of school children. The two studies reported in this paper were designed with this major goal in mind. Subsidiary aims included the development of a relatively novel technique for studying children's conformity behavior, the examination of such behavior in children attending two very different midwestern school systems, and the introduction (in Experiment 2) of a familiarization manipulation (previously applied in studies of racial attitudes in children by Cantor, 1972, and Ball & Cantor, 1974) into the conformity paradigm.

EXPERIMENT 1

Method

Subjects

The data for Experiment 1 were collected in March and April of 1974 from a total of 311 children (58 black females, 77 black males, 76 white females, 97 white males, and three children whose racial memberships were uncertain) attending inner-city schools in Des Moines, Iowa. The age range was 9-13 years (M = 10.81, SD = .32). For reasons and by methods to be spelled out below, the data for 192 of these children (age range 9-12 years, M = 10.77, SD = .72) were selected for detailed analysis. The children came from predominantly lower-class homes.

Materials

The materials included colored slides of 10 different young adolescent males (termed hereafter the "models"). Half the models were black and half white. The photographs from which the slides were made came from the files of an out-of-state school photographer. Also used were black and white slides of 10 different white infants. The photographs from which these were made had previously been rated by adults as being ambiguous in facial expression with respect to an "unhappy-happy" dimension (see Cantor, 1971, for further information about the infant pictures). The slides were presented by use of a Kodak Carousel projector. Every child was provided with a 10-page booklet, each page containing a row of five schematic drawings of a face, these differing only in the shapes of the mouths (from left to right: large downturn, small downturn, straight line, small upturn, and large upturn). The children were told these stood,

respectively, for "very unhappy," "kind of unhappy," "not happy or unhappy," "kind of happy," and "very happy."

Procedure

The children participated in subgroups ranging in size from about 10 to 30. Administration of the task took place either in intact classrooms or in other available facilities (e.g., cafeteria, gym, etc.). The experimental session lasted about 20-25 minutes. The children were first trained to use the 5-point rating scale. In the process, they were told they would subsequently be asked to rate some babies' pictures on an "unhappy-happy" dimension, using that scale. They were then told that the infant pictures were "hard to figure out" and that it might be helpful to know what some "older boys" thought about them. It was explained that a different older boy would be seen via slide projection prior to each infant, that the model's rating of the baby about to be seen would be reported, and that the infant in question would then be presented for them to rate. The children were assured that they were free to use the information or ignore it, as they saw fit. The ratings attributed to the models were, of course, bogus.

A trial consisted of a 15-second presentation of a model, during which the experimenter indicated how the model had rated the infant who was about to be seen, followed by a 15-second presentation of that infant, during which the children were asked to supply their ratings on the appropriate page of the booklet. In all, 10 such trials were administered. These involved the 10 different infants, the five black models (each associated with a different one of the five possible ratings), and the five white models (again, each associated with a different one of the

five possible ratings). The order of occurrence of the bogus ratings across trials was always 3, 1, 5, 2, 4, 3, 1, 5, 2, 4.

Originally, five different partial counterbalancing groups were devised so that different combinations of model pictures, infant pictures, and bogus ratings could be used across various groups of children. Unfortunately, logistical problems prevented use of one of these combinations. However, use of the remaining four (hereafter termed Groups), together with partial counterbalancing of the order of appearance across trials of the various stimuli from Group to Group, made it highly unlikely that any of the main effects of direct interest (i.e., sex of subject, race of subject, or race of model) or their interactions, if of a comparable nature across Groups, could be attributed to peculiar combinations of particular models, bogus ratings, and infant pictures, or to peculiar orderings of the various stimuli across trials.

To avoid placing undue demands on school personnel, foreknowledge of the specific race and sex make-ups of the subgroups to whom the task was successively administered was not obtained. It was merely understood that these subgroups would vary in size from about 10 to 30 and would contain fifth graders representing all four sex-race combinations. These subgroups were assigned to one or another of the Groups mentioned above in a haphazard manner, an attempt simply being made to rotate the Group assignments so as to keep the sex-race complements within Groups as nearly equal in size as possible. As will be seen, this was accomplished with only indifferent success, thus necessitating the selection of a portion of the data for analysis so as to maintain equal numbers of subjects across the various cells of the design. All children taking part in a given experimental session were, of course, administered the same Group treatment. The children constituting a given Group came from two or more different schools.

Results

The data of the three subjects whose racial group could not be designated were discarded. Also discarded were the data of an additional nine subjects, because of mismarked or incompletely marked booklets. Taking into account the four counterbalancing conditions (Groups), the two sexes of subject, and the two races of subject, a total of 16 between-subject combinations was involved. With respect to the remaining 299 subjects, the number of children associated with these combinations ranged from 12 to 41. In order to establish numerical equality across these combinations, 9 female black, 26 male black, 27 female white, and 45 male white subjects were eliminated by strict random procedures so as to produce a constant N of 12 per combination (thus, total N = 192).

The ratings made by the children were assigned the values 1-5 (1 = "very unhappy;" . . .; 5 = "very happy"). The raw rating scores were used to compute the average ratings given by the four Groups to each infant picture. Since a different one of four of the five possible bogus ratings was associated with a given infant across Groups, it was possible to conduct trend analyses on the mean ratings of each infant as a function of the bogus ratings in question. These analyses served to establish whether or not the children as a group tended to conform to the models' ratings.

Table 1 contains the means just mentioned, plus the overall means and SDs for the various infants and the results of the preliminary main effect tests and the trend analyses. (The blank cells under the heading "Bogus Rating" reflect the fact that only four of the five planned

counterbalancing Groups were used; note that each of the five bogus ratings was omitted twice across the 10 infants.) In only one case (Infant #3)

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insert Table 1 about here
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is the main effect for bogus rating nonsignificant, thus making trend analysis superfluous. Of the remaining nine infants, seven produced significant linear trends, always in the direction of higher average ratings when higher bogus ratings are involved. In two cases (Infants #1 and #7), the linear trends are nonsignificant but the quadratic trends are significant. Even in these cases, it is apparent that at least a portion of the expected effect of bogus ratings occurred. Thus, it seems clear that the children were influenced by the bogus ratings and in the expected manner.

It will be noted that the overall means associated with the 10 infants differ considerably among themselves, indicating that the children systematically rated some infants as "more happy" than others. This, together with the obvious failure to obtain perfect one-to-one correspondence between the bogus ratings and the average ratings provided by the children, indicates that the subjects did exercise a degree of independence from the models, though they were clearly influenced by them to a considerable extent.

Deviation scores were used to test for the effects on conformity behavior of the variables of central interest. The absolute difference between each of the child's ratings and the associated bogus rating was first computed. Two means were then calculated for each child--one based on the five deviation scores involving the black models, the other on the

five deviation scores involving the white models. These means were entered into an analysis of variance that included Sex of Subject, Race of Subject, and Groups (1-4) as between-subjects variables, and Race of Model as a within. The analysis revealed four significant effects: (a) the Groups main effect [F (3, 176) = 21.66, $p < .01$]; (b) the Sex of Subject main effect [F (1, 176) = 3.94, $p < .05$]; [illegible]ace of Model X Groups interaction [F (3, 176) = 9.12, $p < .01$]; and [illegible] Race of Model X Race of Subject X Groups interaction [F (3, 176) = 2.71, $p < .05$]. The Groups main effect merely indicates that the four counterbalancing arrangements differed in the amount of conformity behavior associated with them (means for Groups 1-4 are 1.42, 1.38, .84, and 1.35, respectively), due presumably to the different combinations of bogus ratings and stimuli involved, and is itself of no direct interest. The means involved in the Sex of Subject main effect are 1.19 for the females and 1.31 for the males. Thus, the females conformed more than did the males.

The significant interactions were followed up by several analyses, only the more important of which will be reported here. Two analyses were conducted--one for the black and the other for the white subjects--in which Groups was a between-subjects and Race of Model a within-subjects variable. In the case of the black subjects, a significant main effect was obtained for Race of Model [F (1, 92) = 4.15, $p < .05$]. For the black subjects, the mean deviation from black models is 1.33 and that from white models is 1.21. Thus, the black subjects as a total group conformed more to the white than to the black models. In the case of the white subjects, the corresponding analysis revealed a significant Race of Model X Groups interaction [F (3, 92) = 10.58, $p < .01$]. Follow-up analyses

indicated that the white subjects in Group 2 conformed significantly more to the black models (M = 1.15) than to the white models (M = 1.68) [F (1, 23) = 26.12, $p < .01$], whereas the white subjects in Group 4 conformed more to the white models (M = 1.13) than to the black models (M = 1.47) [F (1, 23) = 8.47, $p < .01$].

Among the various nonsignificant effects in the original analysis, two bear special mention. The mean deviation of all subjects from the black models is 1.27 and that from the white models is 1.22 [F (1, 176) = 1.43, $p > .05$]. The mean deviation for black subjects as a total group is 1.27, whereas that for white subjects as a total group is 1.22 [F (1, 176) < 1.00]. Thus, the overall amount of conformity did not differ significantly for black and white models or for black and white subjects.

The major results of Experiment 1 may be summarized as follows. The female subjects conformed more than did the males. The black and white subjects did not differ in total amount of conformity, but they did differ in their patterns of conforming. Specifically, the black subjects as a total group conformed more to white than to black models, whereas the white subjects as a total group responded nondifferentially in this regard (more conformity to black than white models in Group 2, more conformity to white than black models in Group 4, and no significant difference in Groups 1 and 3).

EXPERIMENT 2

The most straightforward result in Experiment 1 was the Sex of Subject effect indicating that, in a group of inner-city school children living in

a large midwestern community, more conformity was displayed by girls than by boys. Experiment 2 was conducted to determine if a comparable sex effect would be obtained in a small university community in the same state, the school system in question serving predominantly white, middle-class families. Since no race-of-subject comparison could be made in this case, that variable was replaced with a within-subjects manipulation of prior familiarity with the models. On the basis of results from two previous familiarization studies (Cantor, 1972; Ball & Cantor, 1974) in which it was found that familiarization enhanced white children's attitudes toward blacks but diminished those toward whites, it was predicted that the subjects in Experiment 2 would conform more to familiar than to nonfamiliar black models and more to nonfamiliar than to familiar white models.

Method

Subjects

The data for Experiment 2 were collected in November and December of 1974 from a total of 219 white children (99 females, 120 males) and five nonwhites, all attending school in the Iowa City Community School District. The age range was 9-12 years (M = 10.30, SD = .52). The data for 176 whites (age range 10-11 years, M = 10.28, SD = .45) were selected for detailed analysis (see reasons for and methods of selection below). The children came from predominantly middle-class homes.

Materials

The materials were the same as those used in Experiment 1, except for the deletion of two infant pictures (#1 and #3--see Table 1), one black model, and one white model.

Procedure

The children participated as intact classes in regular classrooms, the subgroups tested in the various administrations of the task ranging in size from about 15-25. The experimental session lasted approximately 25-30 minutes.

The children were first asked during a familiarization phase to view pictures of two of the black and two of the white models. These slides were presented four times each for a total of 16 such exposures, the duration in each case being 15 seconds. The order was such that each model appeared once in each of the four-trial blocks involved in the familiarization sequence. Following familiarization, the children were treated essentially as were those in Experiment 1. Exceptions to this included the following: (a) only eight infants and eight models (four black and four white) were seen; and (b) the bogus rating of 3 ("not happy or unhappy") was omitted, the order of appearance of bogus ratings across trials thus being 1, 5, 2, 4, 1, 5, 2, 4 for all subjects.

Once again, four counterbalancing treatments (Groups) were devised to accomplish the same sorts of purposes as were involved in Experiment 1. In addition, these made it possible to designate different pairs of blacks and of whites to serve the roles of familiar and nonfamiliar models across counterbalancing conditions. Also once again, the subgroups given the task in the various administrations of it were assigned to Groups in a haphazard manner.

Results

The data of the five nonwhite children were discarded, as were those of four subjects (two boys, two girls) who mismarked their booklets.

Because there was only a total of six subjects (three boys, three girls) who were neither 10 nor 11 years old, it was arbitrarily decided (without examining their data) to eliminate them. This left 209 subjects spread across the eight Sex of Subject-Group combinations, with the numbers of subjects in these cells ranging from 22 to 31. By strict random procedures, the numbers in excess of the minimum were reduced to 22 per combination, thus providing a total N for analysis purposes of 176. Six females and 27 males were eliminated by this procedure.

The scoring methods were exactly the same as those used in Experiment 1. Table 2 contains the mean ratings given the eight infants in Experiment 2 as a function of bogus rating. (The absence of blank cells under the heading "Bogus Rating" stems from the fact that rating 3 was not used as a bogus rating in Experiment 2; the infant numbers from Experiment 1 were retained to facilitate comparisons between Tables 1 and 2.)

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insert Table 2 about here

Once again, only one infant (#6 in this case) failed to be associated with a significant main effect for bogus rating. Of the remaining seven infants, each one produced a significant linear trend, with higher bogus ratings tending to be associated with higher mean ratings in every case. Thus, the evidence once again indicates the children were influenced by the bogus ratings attributed to the models. However, as was the case for Experiment 1 (see Table 1), evidence can be adduced in Table 2 to suggest that the children's conformity to the models' judgments was hardly perfect.

Again, the absolute difference between each of the child's ratings and the associated bogus rating was computed. Four means were then calculated for each child, these being based on the two deviation scores involving each of the four combinations of black and white and familiar and nonfamiliar models. These means were entered into an analysis of variance that included Sex of Subject and Groups (1-4) as between-subjects variables and Race of Model and Familiarity of Model (familiar vs. nonfamiliar) as withins.

As in Experiment 1, the main effect for Groups is significant [F (3, 168) = 9.13, $p < .01$], indicating that the various stimulus and bogus rating combinations differed in the amount of conformity associated with them (means for Groups 1-4 are 1.56, 1.19, 1.34, and 1.14, respectively). The only other significant effects are the interactions involving Familiarity of Model X Groups, Race of Model X Groups, and Familiarity of Model X Race of Model X Groups (in each case, $p < .01$). Unlike the significant interactions in Experiment 1, the present ones do not suggest the appropriateness of follow-up analyses. Each of them involves crossover effects revealed when familiar vs. nonfamiliar model, black vs. white model, or familiar vs. nonfamiliar X black vs. white model comparisons are examined across Groups. When these patterns are considered in conjunction with the lack of a significant main effect for Familiarity of Model or for Race of Model, it becomes apparent that the interactions in question have the same interpretive status as does the Groups main effect--i.e., they can be regarded simply as consequences of the stimulus and bogus rating combinations associated with the various counterbalancing conditions.

Among the nonsignificant effects, the most notable is that for Sex of Subject [F (1, 168)< 1.00]. Although the girls again deviated from the models less than did the boys (M = 1.28 and 1.34, respectively), this clearly is a chance difference. So also are the Race of Model difference [F (1, 168)< 1.00] (mean for black models is 1.32, for white models is 1.29) and the Familiarity of Model difference [F (1, 168) = 1.19, p >.05] (mean for familiar models is 1.34, for nonfamiliar models is 1.28).

In summary, Experiment 2 produced no evidence indicating that sex of subject, race of model, or familiarity of model systematically affected the conformity behavior of the white children serving as subjects in the study.

A final set of results seems worth mentioning. When the eight infant pictures common to Experiments 1 and 2 are rank-ordered on the basis of the overall mean ratings given them (see column 7 in Tables 1 and 2) and a correlation is computed on these ranks, the resulting R is .74 (p <.05). When the same statistic is computed on rank orders derived from the SDs associated with the various infants (see column 8 in Tables 1 and 2), the resulting R is .82 (p <.02). Thus, despite the numerous differences characterizing the two experiments, a remarkable degree of agreement exists with respect to how the infant pictures were rated by the two groups of subjects in question.

Discussion

It has doubtless occurred to the reader that the use of just male models in the kind of paradigm employed in the studies reported in this paper could strongly affect outcomes relating to sex-of-subject and

perhaps other differences. Thus, the psychological significance of the sex effect obtained in Experiment 1 (females more conforming than males), taken by itself, might on this basis be considered uncertain, at best. However, the failure to find any sex effect (although ample evidence occurred of conformity in the subjects as a whole) in Experiment 2 clearly indicates that girls will not necessarily conform more than boys simply because male and not female models are used. With this point in mind, it seems reasonable to conclude that the two experiments suggest the existence of a social class difference, with lower-class girls conforming more than lower-class boys but there being no difference between the sexes in the case of middle-class children, at least under the circumstances characterizing these two studies. The desirability of including models of both sexes is, of course, recognized and research in which this will be done is now being planned.

In many regards, the outcomes of the two studies are encouraging, from an equalitarian standpoint. In neither case was there strong evidence for a race of model effect. Neither the white, lower-class children in Experiment 1 nor the white, middle-class children in Experiment 2 showed any consistent tendency to conform differentially to the black and white models. Furthermore, the black and white subjects in Experiment 1 failed to differ in overall amount of conformity. The tendency of the black subjects in Experiment 1 to conform more to white than to black models constitutes the only race effect of any consequence to emerge from the analyses conducted on the two sets of deviation score data.

The failure of the model's familiarity to have any effect on conformity in Experiment 2 provides a stark contrast to the demonstrated potency of this variable in other contexts involving child subjects (see, e.g., Cantor, 1969a, 1969b, 1972; Ball & Cantor, 1974). It is possible, of course, that an insufficient amount of familiarization was provided in the present case.

The high degree of consistency with which the infant pictures were rated across the two experiments was an unexpected outcome and attests to the utility of the methodology developed for use in these studies. Along with the systematic effects revealed in the trend analyses applied to the raw scores and the analyses of variance applied to the deviation scores, the obtained inter-experiment R values suggest that the children were attentive and motivated, even though working in groups and, on occasion, under nonoptimal, makeshift conditions.

With respect to the background literature cited in the introduction, it will be recalled that numerous (but by no means all) earlier studies have provided evidence for more conformity in girls than in boys. The present data add another instance of such an effect, but suggest that the finding may now apply to lower- but not middle-class children. There has been too little investigation of race effects in conformity behavior to make possible any mention of a trend in this regard. The data reported here point to the possibility of a different pattern of conformity in black and white children in their reactions to black and white models, but no difference in overall amount of conformity in the two groups of children.

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Table 1

Mean Ratings of the 10 Infants as a Function of Bogus Ratings, Plus Overall Infant Means and Standard Deviations and the Trend Analysis Results (Experiment 1)

	Bogus Rating					Over-		Rating Main	Linear	Quadratic
Infant #	1	2	3	4	5	all M	SD	Effect	Trend	Trend
1	3.33	4.10	4.02	3.75	---	3.80	1.05	**	n.s.	**
2	---	2.54	2.98	3.25	3.23	3.00	1.09	**	**	--
3	3.81	---	3.71	3.88	3.94	3.83	.77	n.s.	--	--
4	1.62	2.27	---	2.94	3.04	2.47	1.47	**	**	--
5	1.83	2.15	2.23	---	2.92	2.28	1.03	**	**	--
6	2.98	4.46	3.96	4.35	---	3.94	1.14	**	**	--
7	---	2.81	3.29	3.50	3.10	3.18	1.16	*	n.s.	**
8	2.90	---	3.08	3.08	4.08	3.29	1.51	**	**	--
9	1.85	3.02	---	3.50	2.92	2.82	1.14	**	**	--
10	2.25	2.25	2.88	---	3.06	2.61	1.36	**	**	--

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

Table 2

Mean Ratings of the Eight Infants as a Function of Bogus Ratings, Plus Overall Infant Means and Standard Deviations and the Trend Analysis Results (Experiment 2)

	+Bogus Rating				Over-		Rating Main	Linear
+Infant #	1	2	4	5	all M	SD	Effect	Trend
2	2.20	2.75	3.11	3.02	2.77	1.09	**	**
4	1.50	2.07	2.82	2.25	2.16	1.37	**	**
[illegible]	1.50	2.45	2.73	2.43	2.28	1.13	**	**
6	3.77	3.91	3.91	4.11	3.92	1.02	n.s.	--
7	2.43	2.68	3.07	3.05	2.81	1.15	*	**
8	2.18	2.14	3.14	3.89	2.84	1.61	**	**
9	1.86	2.48	2.64	3.32	2.58	1.10	**	**
10	1.82	2.75	3.68	3.59	2.96	1.34	**	**

*$p < .05$

**$p < .01$

+Infants #1 and #3 and bogus rating 3 were not used in Experiment 2.